

Forum Identifies New Directions for Classical Music Careers

Rice University's Shepherd School of Music recently set out to create a national focus on new career models with a student-centered forum, "Careers in Music Performance: Convening Student Perspectives and Creating Models for the 21st Century."

This forum, the brainchild of Benjamin Kamins, professor of bassoon, and Janet Rarick, artist teacher of professional development, was comprised of performances, workshops and discussions. It was designed to inspire music students to consider the variety of paths they can take to find, and possibly redefine, success in their chosen field.

"When students have a narrow view of the profession, they limit themselves in finding their own best career path," Kamins said. "There is a misconception among music students that you get a job in an orchestra and you live happily ever after. It's incredible to get and keep that job, but it doesn't guarantee artistic satisfaction."

"It seemed natural to have very gifted young performers come together to draw positive, creative energy from each other to formulate possible new directions for our profession," Kamins said. "New research tells us that student perceptions about music careers are significantly influenced by their

interaction with their peer groups."

That research was conducted by a former Shepherd School student-turned-researcher, Shoshana Dobrow.

"Social influences, from both peers and from parents, can have a powerful effect on musicians' sense of calling and on their career decisions," Dobrow said. "These findings are intriguing to me because we tend to think of a 'calling' as being something very personal and very internal—not something subject to social influence, as my research is showing."

The forum was moderated by Eric Booth. Currently a faculty member at the Juilliard School, Booth founded the Art and Education program at Juilliard and is the artistic director of the mentoring program.

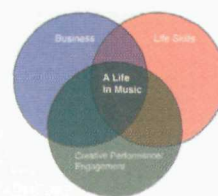
"What is at stake, in my view, is nothing less than the future of classical music," Booth said. "We are delving deeply into identifying and building the skills that are essential to develop a 21st-century musician, not just a buffed-up, teched-up 19th- or 20th-century musician."

Faculty at the seminar identified three areas that are vital to a "life in music": business knowledge, life skills and creative performance/engagement. To support students with their efforts to achieve these skills, schools are encouraged to develop tiered, multi-faceted programs tailored to the culture of each institution (Figure 1).

Angela Myles Beeching, a faculty attendee from the New England Conservatory, said, "The issues that resonated throughout the weekend underscored essential issues for musicians, educators and music schools." These included:

- Examining how we define success in music
- Articulating a personal mission, an

A Life in Music



Develop Tiered Multi-faceted Programs Tailored to the Culture of Each Institution

- Mentoring
- Internships
- Awards for Entrepreneurial Projects
- Intersections for Student-Designed Projects
- Regional Collaborations Among Institutions
- Resource Network within the Institution
- Utilizing Professional Organizations
- Supported Career Office
- Coordinated Master Class Series
- One-on-One Counseling
- Short-Term Residencies

Figure 1

ensembles' mission and an institution's mission

- Finding a sense of usefulness and purpose as a performer through connecting with audiences
- Imagining and creating one's own niche
- Thinking of career development as project-based

Another aspect of the forum challenged student participants to create interactive performances, concentrating on innovative, unique programming to engage audiences.

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For more information about the careers forum, visit <http://music-careers.rice.edu>.